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ABSTRACT

Rural social work has its roots both in social movements and in personal social services. Social workers in rural areas need to be effective not only in individual change, but also in organizational or community change, defined as the process by which people attempt to promote the well-being of their community. Similarities exist between contemporary community organizing and community development; both reflect a self-help and community movement approach. This paper examines, first, the basic models of community organizing from a social work perspective, and, second, the community development model as it has evolved in the rural setting. Three models of community organization exist: (1) the locality development model, (2) the social planning model, and (3) the social action model. There are three themes of community development: (1) self-help, non-directive or cooperative; (2) conflict or confrontation; and (3) technical intervention, planning or assistance. Community organization and community development models exhibit more similarities than differences when compared in these configurations: (1) locality development and self help; (2) social planning and technical intervention planning; and (3) social action, conflict, and confrontation. This paper cites 38 references. (ALL)

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RURAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE: SHOULD WE USE A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION OR A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL?

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RURAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE: SHOULD WE USE A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION OR A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL?

Rural social work has its roots in both social movements and in the provision of personal social services. These latter are seen as the provision of programs and direct services in areas such as child welfare, mental health services, and services to the elderly. The generalist model of has given renewed emphasis to the recognized need of rural social workers to be skilled in implementing the planned change process at multiple points of intervention. [1]

Social workers working in a rural setting recognize the need to be effective in not only individual change, but also in organizational or community change. As Martinez-Brawley states,

> it is important to distinguish between the social movement and the service delivery aspects of rural social work. In a social movement, a group of people of shared sentiments take collective action to gain concessions in the arena of public policy. [2]

Ross defined the community organization component of practice as the process by which a community identifies and sets priorities in terms of its needs and objectives. He further proposed four roles suited to the task: guiding, enabling, expertness, and social therapy. [3] Rubin and Rubin define community organizing as solving problems by helping people overcome their sense of powerlessness while they go on to view community development as involving "local empowerment through organized groups of people acting collectively

to control decisions, projects, programs and policies that affect them as a community." [4]

Community development and community organization has a long history within rural settings as well as within urban settings and developing countries. [5] The term community development, although having some differences in definition, can be generally defined as the process in which the people of a community attempt to promote what they consider to be the well-being of their community. [5] Social work sees community development as

> a process of deliberate intervention into the social network or structure of relations among people and organizations in a local area or interest community to facilitate social problem solving and improve patterns of service delivery and sociopolitical functioning. ...community development usually involves a grass-roots membership or a "bottom-up rather than a professional, bureaucratic or "top-down" approach to social problems.

What we see emerging is that the definition and process of contemporary community organizing and community development seem to have many similarities.

Both seem to reflect a self-help and community movements approach. This paper examines the basic models of community organizing from a social work perspective with the community development model as developed in rural settings. The intent is to add to the knowledge and skill base of social workers working within a rural setting by providing them with additional skills from the traditional community development models of practice.

THEMES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Rothman identifies three models of community organization which seem to encompass the various strains and schools of thought that have been delineated over the years. The models are: (1) the locality development model, (2) the social planning model, and (3) the social action model.[8]

If we look at the community development literature, which also has had a significant involvement and impact on rural services and quality of life, we also see three themes of community development (Christenson and Robinson, 1980). These three themes of community development practice are: (1) self-help, non-directive, or cooperative, (2) conflict or confrontation, and (3) technical intervention, planning, or assistance.

Figure 1

THEMES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Locality Development	Self-help, non-directive, or cooperative
Social Planning	Technical intervention, planning
Social Action	Conflict or Confrontation

Community organizing as a separate social work practice method reached its zenith in the late 1960's and early 1970's with the War on Poverty, the civil rights movement, the Great Society, and similar programs. Grass-roots movements and community involvement in decision-making were seen as an ideal whose time had come. The

reality, as we move into the 1990's appears to be quite different in both approach and outcome from what we envisioned only twenty years ago. A review of the community action, community organizing, community practice literature reveals that much of the writing and research was conducted prior to 1976. [9] Most of the current literature deals more with administration and planning in an organizational sense that with community action and community development. [10]

In 1976, Grosser expanded the boundaries of community organization practice in proposing seven "spheres of activity" for the community organization practitioner. These categories included: urban community development; ombudsman services; non-violent direct action; expertise and consultation; objectivity and research; publicity and fund raising.[11] These clearly reflected the inclusion of community development .

Others, notably Ross [12], Dunham [13], Warren [14], Alinsky [15] and Rothman [16], have all contributed to the theoretical and practical delineations of community change, community development, community organization and community organization practice. Ross defined community organization as the process by which a community identifies and sets priorities in terms of its' needs and objectives. He further proposed four roles suited to the professional community organization worker. These included guiding, enabling, expertness, and social therapy. [17]

The models, as Ross explains, are to be seen as pure types only for the purpose of illustration. The reality is that these models

are not exhaustive of all actual or potential possibilities. They do, however, provide a point of departure for the discussion of the strategies and activities of community organization practice, especially in comparison to the themes of community development.

Locality Development/Self Help.

Locality development, presupposes that community change can be pursued through the notion of "maximum feasible participation" of a variety of community people in determining local community goals and carrying out the agreed upon action to achieve those goals. These included democratic procedures, voluntary cooperation, self-help. This was embraced as an ideological development of the 1980's which was noted and institutionalized by Naisbitt. The development of indigenous leadership and educational objectives was also identified. [18] The emergence of "self-help groups" seems to exemplify this approach at this time. Both the community development approach of "locality development" and the community development "self help" approach are almost synonymous in the literature. This model is most often referred to as "community development" although it is but one of the major themes of community development.

Community development is known variously as community education, community participation, and community organization. Christenson and Robinson found that "community development is people in a community reaching a decision to initiate a social action process to change their situation. People achieve it through cooperation, confrontation, or technical intervention." [19]

In other words, the primary objective of community development is to promote, sustain, support and maintain community action. The United Nations defines it as a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance on the community's initiative. Community development can also be seen as the active participation of local community people in resisting, or supporting some cause, issue, or program that interest them.

What seems to stand out in all of the above delineations of locality development/community development is that consensus and unity is a central objective of this enterprise. The reconciliation of different interests in the community should be the overriding and guiding principle in community organization and planning. An emphasis is placed upon cooperation, altruism, and the 'common welfare' broadly defined as a matter of opposing group preferences.

People can come together and work together to improve their situation, stimulate local initiative, and develop leadership. Perhaps the key to this role or theme for both community organization (CO) and community development (CD) is that the role of the social worker is to help the community think through the following: (1) why they want what they want, (2) what the short and long term effects will be, and (3) whether the things they want will produce the intended results? Both emphasize the learning of skills to participate in various arenas. A common area of concern is the assumption that there is relative autonomy in rural

communities and that there is an ability of the local community to effect change in conditions that may in fact be greatly influenced by external or vertical linkages or forces.

Social Planning/Technical Intervention, Planning.

The social planning approach emphasizes the technical aspects of problem-solving with regard to substantive social problems. In social planning the degree of citizen participation can vary from passive observation to assertive direction depending on the issues. Controlled change, which is rational, deliberately focused and planned, is central to this model. The complexity of this model can be seen in Kahn's [20] formulation of the elements identified as residing at the core of planning. He reasserts Weber's statement.

> Planning is that process of making rational decisions about future goals and future courses of action which relies upon explicit tracings of the repercussions and the value implications associated with alternative courses of action and, in turn, requires explicit evaluation and choice among the alternative matching goal-action sets. [21]

Kahn further states that social planning addresses several domains as we move from smaller to larger societal units, from inter/intra agency or organizational planning to community planning and on to social planning with emphasis on balanced development. [22]

As can be seen from the above, the social planning approach presupposes that the initiation of change in a complex industrial and technological environment today requires "expert" planners who, through the exercise of technical training and skills, including the ability to manipulate large bureaucratic organizations, can artfully guide difficult change processes. [23] While the application

of this model is not for the "faint of heart" neither is it a radical approach. Building community capacity or fostering or encouraging fundamental social change are not aims of this approach.

Several specific assumptions underlie both the social planning and technical assistance models. They are: (1) someone knows about something that another does not, (2) someone decides that the potential recipient needs assistance, (3) there exists a climate within which a provider-receiver relationship can be established, and (4) someone provides assistance and others receive it. Both CD and CO seem to accept these assumptions, or at least operate within them.

This model tends to be more of a consensus model than a conflict model. Although conflicts can arise in disagreements over the social problems to be addressed or who is to be involved in formulating the goals of change and the like, the resolution of these conflicts are based on rational processes inherent in a problem-solving process. This model also fits well with the community development theme of technical intervention, planning, or assistance. [24] The CD literature emphasizes the importance of defining projects and "improvements" from the point of view of the clients rather than of the technical assistance teams or "experts" who assess the situation just as the social work literature does. A final not from both CO and CD approaches is that there is growing evidence showing that the process by which the assistance is carried out is as important as the context of the assistance.

Social Action/Conflict, Confrontation.

The focus of this approach is a disadvantaged segment of society that needs to be organized for efficacious action on its own behalf with the larger community for increased resources, goods, services, and treatments in accordance with social justice or democracy. [25] This can be in either a rural or an urban setting.

Perhaps the most well-known modern proponent of this approach is Alinsky, who is utilized . Boyte has stated that "Alinsky is to community organization as Freud is to psychoanalysis." [26] The themes of urban social structure, organization and community power provide the framework of social action that we associate with Alinsky. The importance of this formulation lies in the promise and potential of his vision of community organization. Alinsky recognized the interdependence of units of social structure and the often competitive and transitory character of local attachments. He further argued that communities do not exist in vacuums as self-sufficient, all encompassing entities. Instead they reflect the warp and woof of urban and national processes and policies. [27] He envisioned the community as units of common interests and not necessarily of geographical territory. He felt that was the key to unifying residents and maintaining a vital community. It is the continuing struggle between vertical attachments, i.e. the economic and political institutions of the larger society over which local communities exercise relatively little control and the horizontal attachments, i.e., the intimate networks and groups in the locality. The "community of interest" concept is valuable in this

context because this unit is seen as most capable of representing and defending community needs and interests. The primary role of the "community of interests" is to mediate between the inherently powerless street neighborhoods and the inherently powerful city as a totality.

Alinsky also saw that the creation and maintenance of "community of interests" attachment required purposive and sustained action and the organizer was crucial as an active agent for the conscious and intentional creation of community. The products and processes were seen as too important to be left to amateurs and serendipity. [28]

Alinsky delineated community organization as a sustained process which focused on a variety of issues in the community. A realignment of community interests toward shared interests and problems of local residents was central to his strategies. "Organizations are built on issues that are specific and realizable....Organizations must be based on many issues." [29] Purposive social construction of community through conflict to engender cooperative and organized community response is the key concept to keep in mind with regard to social structure. The catalyst for community organization is the organization, its creation and maintenance. This is considered by Reitzes and Reitzes to be the most salient feature of Alinsky's approach. It is the organization which provides the structure, leadership and policy direction which coordinates the action of members and serves to influence and mediate the relationship between the community and

outside (vertical) institutions. Alinsky used in particular three types of activities to maintain residents' interest and participation in the organization: (1) Use of existing groups, e.g., church groups and unions, in introducing residents to the notion of community action and a shared approach to community problems; (2) A call for a community congress or convention. The purpose of this is to transform the coalition of diverse groups into a broad-based, multiple issues and permanent community organization. The tasks to be accomplished at such a gathering is to approve a budget, select representatives and elect executive officers, and establish standing committees for each of the identified community issues to be addressed; (3) Small scale conflicts with internal antagonists. This was to focus the residents' awareness on the effectiveness of joint action and active self-interest. Alinsky strongly recommended that initial issues be highly visible and concrete, of particular interest to residents and easy to win. The target of confrontation was typically agencies outside of the community but who depended on the community for clientele, e.g., merchants, realtors, hospitals, social service agencies, landlords and various municipal services, such as, law enforcement, gas and electric, bus/transportation companies, and the like. [30]

The third major component of Alinsky's approach to community organization is power and a commitment to democratic pluralism. Reitzes and Reitzes reiterate, Alinsky saw urban politics and power as a continuous, ever changing, and dynamic interaction among

economic, political, religious, and social or ethnic groups. As issues arise, groups with hitherto divergent interests create coalitions around particular issues and confront opponents in the appropriate political, economic, legal and social areas. New issues can create strange bedfellows, indeed. [31]

A major problem in communities which contain large numbers of poor and disenfranchised people is the inability to exert pressure on external institutions in ways that gain their attention or bring them to the bargaining table to participate in resolving community problems. However, Alinsky saw the mobilization of the community through the initial critical incident conflict as a way of generating the community energy needed to create an action focused organization. One of his central goals was to use conflict and confrontation strategies to gain recognition from outside organizations and institutions that the community organization was the legitimate spokesperson and bargaining agent for the community and was consequently a power with which to be reckoned. Simply put, power and conflict were not pejorative words. They were neutral. However, the operationalization of the concepts were often times seen as threatening and therefore negative by the organizations opposed by the communities who wanted redress. Conflict is not seen as a value free approach to community development. [32] The same may be said for present social work literature.

Alinsky's use of nonviolent conflict or rather nonconventional conflict, harassment, and coercion may be the only means of

influence left and available to relatively powerless groups facing powerful and legitimate opponents. The coercive tactic used reflects careful analysis of the vulnerable points of the opposing organizations, such as, picketing organizations to whom public relations is an important commodity, or boycotts where walk-in business or daily or daily attendance rates determine revenue. These were used to force concessions and settlements. The aim of all of this was not to overthrow institutions but to make them more responsive in a democratic way to a much broader set of interests.

The use of conflict as a tactic for change did not originate with Alinsky, although among social workers he is perhaps the most well-known. In synthesizing many of the conflict theories proposed by a number of theorists Duke created a paradigm for conflict analysis which could serve as an action check list for the community action practitioner. The following factors are considered to be the most important for such an analysis:

1. The parties relevant to the situation
2. The interest of each party
3. The relative power, status, and resources of each party
4. The policies, programs, procedures, or behavior by which each pursues its interests
5. The extent to which the relative interest of each party and the policies they are using to pursue them come in conflict with each other and how this conflict is perceived by each party
6. The institutional arrangements within the pursuit of

interests takes place, including

a. formal, normative and/or institutional arrangements

b. informal, and/or unanticipated conditions

c. degree of legitimacy present in the situation

7. The processes through which decisions are made and outcomes are achieved

8. The outcome for each party

9. The relative change in the original conditions as a result of the outcome, including changes in:

a. the power structure (the relative power of each party

b. the interest of each party

c. the allocation of resources and statue

d. the legitimacy of the power structure. [33]

In community organization, particularly in the social action approach, collective action is the essence of community participation. The expected outcome is that institutions of commerce and government become more responsive to citizens, consumers, and employees.

Although conflict strategies are basic to both the CO and CD approaches, there is considerable hesitation at this time to employ these tactics other than as a last resort.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION IN RURAL PRACTICE

According to Galper and Mondros [34], many social workers today assume that their work involves social change interventions and that organizing is part of their daily job. Consequently, there

is little merit seen in educating and training social workers for only working for social change. Traditionally, organizing has wafted and waned as a "sign of the time." It is seen as occurring sporadically as political and populist/reformist movements allow or create a context for it to happen. However, historically, the profession has not responded quickly in periods of social unrest. In fact, we have been charged, often legitimately with being agents of social control rather than agents of social change.

If the primary concern of social worker is for the disenfranchised, the poor, and the powerless, then traditional community organization (or social action and its attendant conflict strategies) would seem to be the appropriate route for generating enduring social change. While strident calls for community power, social justice, and equal distribution of goods, services, resources and political power apparently are not a major focus of social work as reflected in the dearth of recent social work literature devoted to those topics, counting it "down but not out" would seem appropriate at this time. [35] Locality development appears to be the most prevalent approach used by contemporary social workers as it appears to be congruent with the consensus oriented stance promulgated by most community agencies. In addition, there is little money (the so-called "bottom line" these days) in traditional grass roots organizing.

While most social agencies do not openly admit that their needs exist in contradistinction to those of the communities they serve, the questions arises as to whose interests are foremost when

the "bottom line" is invoked as a rationale for not taking a course of action that would benefit solely the consumers of those services.

A populace which perceives itself to be beleaguered by any number of society's ills is fertile ground for grass roots organizing efforts as their sense of powerlessness and anger increases in the face of unemployment, financial insecurity, persistent racism, ageism, sexism, and other socially divisive issues. As communities continued to move from debilitating "impotent rage" to empowerment and efficacy in their own community affairs change will occur as the community wills it to do so. In addition, with the increased emphasis on "Federalism" resulting in the greater latitude of states to control and appropriate ever more limited resources, strong community organizations will be necessary advocate for those needs of the poor and disenfranchised groups. The continued conservative posture of the government along with increasing economic difficulties suggests that the prospects and need for community organizing are indeed promising.

Community organization and development has been influenced by the rationalist and locality conceptions of the public interest, relying principally on consensus strategies in working with the entire community, its citizens and social service consumers through vertically dominated organizations such as United Way, local welfare councils, and social agencies. It has been also influenced by social class and conceptions of the public interest, relying principally on conflict or conflict type strategies in working with

the victims of social injustice and disadvantaged populations, a la Alinsky. The organizers, failing to recognize as meaningful the positive group identity within ethnic groups, have often kept communities from realizing long-term goals of community cohesion and effective community action. [36]

Change forced on groups without regard for their attitudes, wants, expressed needs, and established organizations, indigenous to their groups, have engendered feeling of discomfort and mistrust leading to further group isolation. Harrington [37] has noted that social work had no role in the development of self-contained ethnic neighborhoods, where groups developed institutions (often parallel institutions), such as churches, political clubs, labor unions, mutual aid societies, social agencies, banks, stores, and cultural organizations. Practitioners have not reached out to such institutions as a general rule (the churches being the lone exception) in gaining support and cooperation for effective community action. [38]

CONCLUSIONS

Community organization and community development models and themes have been examined in order to identify important practice principles and similarities. The two are compared and contrasted. What we see emerging are more similarities than differences between community organization and community development. Both encompass much more than locality development type strategies, and perspectives. They both offer a great deal to the rural practitioner. Rural social workers especially should be

knowledgeable of community development and be able to work effectively within this framework. The literature in the field is compatible with the social work value base and theory.

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